

Species: Sea Lamprey

OSPAR Recommendation 2015/03:

Contracting Parties are required to report progress with implementation of recommendations every six years, with initial more frequent reporting until 2019.

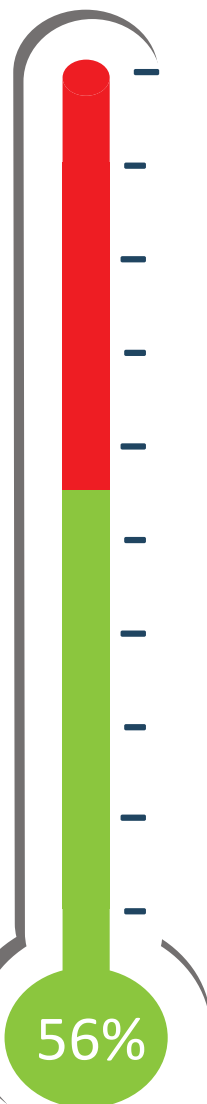
Measures taken by Contracting Parties to protect Sea lamprey include national legislation, restoration of key spawning habitats and designation of MPAs



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Description

The sea lamprey (*Petromyzon marinus*) is one of the largest parasitic fish that migrates marine and fresh waters and ectoparasite species. At the end of the winter, it leaves coastal waters to migrate upstream, at night, into rivers over 500km from the sea. Reproduction takes place between the end of April and the end of May in vast semi-circular nests called redds. The females release a large number of eggs which become lodged between the redd pebbles and die shortly after spawning. Larvae of 5mm length hatch after 10-15 days and immediately go in search of sheltered marginal sandy-silt zones where they stay burrowed for 5 to 7 years. Metamorphosis takes place at the end of the summer when the juveniles swim downstream at night during the autumn and reach the sea by the winter. Their marine growth phase is short and lasts around 2 years by parasiting various fish species (shad, herring, pollock, salmon, mullets, cod, haddock, basking sharks).



Action Highlights

Each Recommendation requires Contracting Parties to report on the methods used to implement the measures. The methods are Legislation, Administrative action and Negotiated agreement, or any combination of these. Some recent examples include:

1. France, Spain, Sweden, and the UK have introduced national legislation;
2. Restoration of key spawning habitats and river migration routes has taken place in Denmark, France, Germany, Spain, and the UK;
3. France, Germany, and the UK have designated MPAs;
4. Monitoring programmes are in place in Denmark, France, Spain, and the UK;
5. The Netherlands, Sweden, and the UK have undertaken work to improve fish passage facilities.

Engagement

The engagement index (left) measures how well Contracting Parties have engaged with the national measures in the Recommendation. The higher the score the greater the number of actions that Contracting Parties, which have reported, have taken to implement the measures in the Recommendation. Click here for more information on the index.

References:

- Background Document for Sea lamprey (OSPAR Publication 431)
- OSPAR Recommendation 2015/03
- OSPAR List of Threatened and/or Declining Species and Habitats (Agreement 2008-06)

Condition

Little is known about the natural variability in the population of sea lamprey and therefore whether the decline is greater than might be expected through natural change. However activities on river systems are known to have affected the ability of adults to migrate up river does however suggest that the decline is at least in part due to human activity rather than natural variability. However awareness of lamprey conservation issues is already reducing the impact of river drainage and channel maintenance works on these species. Nonetheless, if sea lamprey population levels remain at the present low levels then there is even greater likelihood that some populations may fail to achieve favourable conservation status. Sea lamprey feed on large fish including sharks, adult shad and salmon. The re-establishment of these species in rivers will almost certainly aid the re-establishment of large sea lamprey populations.



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